

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub. D² →

1. A system for remote communication, comprising:
a host facility for integrating data into vertical blanking intervals of a television signal and broadcasting the integrated television signal; and
a client for receiving the broadcasted integrated television signal and for separating the integrated television signal into a standard television signal and to-be-supplied data;
wherein the client transmits information to the host facility by connecting to a network linked with the host facility and the client connects to the network only when the information is present at the client and disconnects from the network when the information has been transmitted to the host, whereby the amount of time spent on the network is reduced.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the disconnecting occurs after a predetermined time of inactivity after the information has been transmitted to the host.
3. The system of claim 2, wherein the network is a public telephone network.
4. The system of claim 2, wherein the network is a wide area network.
5. The system of claim 3, wherein the client connects to the public telephone network with a modem.

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6. The system of claim 2, wherein the client further comprises a tuner card for separating the integrated television signal.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the client further comprises a monitor for displaying a representation of the television signal and the to-be-supplied data in separate areas of the monitor.

8. An interactive system for remote educational instruction between an instructor and a plurality of students, the system comprising:

a host facility for integrating a continuous signal of images and sounds with a digital data signal into a television signal, the host facility broadcasting the television signal and receiving data defining actions of the plurality of students;

a plurality of remote multimedia computers each comprising:

a television tuner card for receiving the television signal and converting the television signal into a digital video signal for display on a first section of a monitor of the computer, an audio signal for transmission to a speaker of the computer, and the digital data signal, at least part of the digital data signal being sent for display on a second section of the monitor;

a modem for transmitting the data defining actions of a student to the host broadcasting facility over public phone lines;

wherein the host facility receives the data defining actions of the students from at least one of the plurality of multimedia computers and converts the data defining actions of the students into the digital data signal for subsequent integration into the television signal and broadcasting of the television signal.

9. The remote education system of claim 8, wherein when one of the multimedia computers receives digital data corresponding to the data defining student actions transmitted from the modem of that multimedia computer, the multimedia computer cancels the sending for display to the second section of the monitor.

10. The remote education system of claim 8, wherein the continuous signal of images and sounds represents a presentation of the instructor.

11. The remote education system of claim 8, wherein the host receives the data defining actions of the plurality of students over public phone lines.

12. A method for remote communication between a host facility and a plurality of client facilities, the method comprising:

broadcasting a signal compatible with a television signal at the host facility to the plurality of client facilities;

continuously receiving the television compatible signal at the plurality of client facilities, the television compatible signal containing data defining actions of at least one of the client facilities;

wherein each of the client facilities connects to a network to transmit to the host facility when the data defining the client actions is present at each said client facility, and disconnecting from the network when the data defining the client actions at each said facility has been transmitted to the host facility.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the network is a public telephone network.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the network is a wide area network.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the television signal is broadcast over cable television lines.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the television signal is broadcast through the atmosphere.

17. A method for remote communication between a host facility broadcasting a signal compatible with a television signal and a plurality of client facilities, the method comprising:

continuously receiving the television compatible signal at the plurality of client facilities, the television compatible signal containing first data defining actions of at least one of the client facilities;

connecting each of the client facilities to a network to transmit to the host facility when second data originating at said client facility and defining actions at said client facility

is present at said client facility, and disconnecting from the network when the second data defining actions at said client facility has been transmitted to the host facility.

18. A method for remote communication between a host facility and a client facility, the client facility having a multimedia computer including a television tuner card and a modem, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a first data signal at the host facility, the first data signal being transmitted by the client facilities modem and defining actions of the client facility;

generating a second data signal at the host facility, the second data signal being compatible with a television signal and representing an educational presentation by an instructor;

generating a third data signal at the host facility, the third data signal defining control instructions for the client facility;

integrating said first data signal, said second data signal, and said third data signal at said host facility such that said integrated signal is compatible with a television signal;

transmitting said integrated signal to said tuner card of the client facility.

19. A method for running an on-line bulletin board between a host and a plurality of client facilities, the method comprising:

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continuously transmitting a television compatible signal to the plurality of client facilities, the television compatible signal containing first data defining general bulletin board information, and second data defining information specific to a selected one or more of the client facilities;

intermittently receiving third data from the client facilities defining actions at said client facilities;

integrating a portion of the received third data into the television compatible signal as the first data or second data for transmission to the plurality of client facilities.

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